DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 321 CE 052 700

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TITLE On-the-Job Training in Africa. Training Discussion Paper No. 27.
INSTITUTION International Labour Office, Geneva (Switzerland).
REPORT NO ISBN-92-2-106790-4
PUB DATE Jun 88
NOTE 16p.; Edited by the Training Policies Branch.
AVAILABLE FROM ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211, Geneva 22, Switzerland.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Vocational Education; *Apprenticeships; *Craft Workers; Developing Nations; Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Labor Force Development; Nonformal Education; *On the Job Training; *Training Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Africa

ABSTRACT

Asking how to enrich on-the-job-training and, in particular, the traditional apprenticeship system in Africa without unduly burdening employers or smothering this system that is firmly rooted in African culture and is particularly well-suited to the conditions of African life, this document concludes that it is necessary to improve the skills of those who provide the on-the-job training. Consequently, master craftsworkers should be subsidized by the state (through the reimbursement of funds they give to apprentices for spending money or through the provision of raw materials at favorable prices) if they can demonstrate they are proficient not just at their craft but at providing training. Taking such steps is important because apprenticeship is suitable for Africa in that it can be used to train a very large number of people and does not require a large investment. Most small employers learned their trade through traditional apprenticeship; this method seems to compare favorably with the education provided by African formal technical educational institutions not only in cost but also in quality and in ensuring subsequent employment. Some modern companies have successfully combined practical and theoretical instruction through alternate periods of on-the-job training and in-plant training away from the work station. (CML)

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TRAINING POLICIES

Discussion Paper No. 27

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING IN AFRICA

by

Daniel Bas

CE052700

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ISBN 92-2-106790-4

First published 1988
Second impression 1989

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PREFACE

This paper has been among the ILO contributions to the United Nations International Conference on "human dimensions of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development" held in Khartoum (5-8 March 1988).

It owes much to Mr. Fred Fluitman, ILO Vocational Training Branch (F/PROF/PROG), who enriched it considerably by his comments and data and accepted to go and introduce it in the Khartoum meeting. The author is therefore very grateful to him.

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INTRODUCTION

On-the-job training is as old as the world. We all learn on the job. Every day, wittingly or not, we learn from our own activities and the examples and advice of other workers, above all those who are older and more experienced than ourselves. In many African countries the traditional system of education by "age groups" affords an especially favourable cultural basis for on-the-job training by making apprenticeship to life essentially a matter of imitation of the "big brothers" in the immediately higher age group.

With the industrial revolution and the increasing role of the State in education, on-the-job training suffered a temporary eclipse. As the school system proved, however, all too often inapt for the transmission of the skills, attitudes and know-how indispensable for harmonious integration in the production system, more appropriate and less costly approaches than formal education are returning to favour. On-the-job training is again finding its place among the concerns of those responsible for legislation and organisation of training as they try to combine it with theoretical and practical courses given inside or outside the enterprise.

On-the-job training takes place at an ordinary workplace and makes the task itself a part of the instruction given and a means for the acquisition of practical skill. The traditional apprenticeship system obtaining in all African countries, whether in rural areas or the urban informal sector, is a good example of almost pure on-the-job training free of any addition of organised, planned theoretical courses involving sequences, stages, grades, and approval. Certain shortcomings of traditional apprenticeship have led, nearly everywhere in Africa, to the proliferation of laws for the "adaptation" or "renovation" of the apprenticeship system, all of them seeking to improve the theoretical part of training and organise co-ordinated alternation between the handicraft workshop and the classroom.

Enterprises in the modern sector have had to remedy the deficiencies of the educational system and provide specialised training for the work station on the job. Some have resorted to legal apprenticeship contracts, but most have simply hired workmen and trained them at their work station. High technology nationwide enterprises (energy, transport, etc.) employing personnel with very special skills not normally covered by the educational system have had to create their own in-plant training centres. Training provided by the enterprise "away from the work station", but nevertheless in plant training given in premises (classrooms, ad hoc workshops, laboratories) and with equipment specially made for theoretical and practical training, will not be considered in this article except in so far as it is closely linked with on-the-job training.

In the first part of this article, we shall describe a form of on-the-job training in its pure state that is very widespread in Africa, namely traditional apprenticeship with its qualities, defects and new trends. In a second part, we shall examine attempts made to enrich this system by organising alternate training between the work station and the training centre, between practical and theoretical training. We shall review and discuss the efforts made in this area by legislation, institutions and

enterprises. Finally, in a third part, recommendations will be put forward with a view to obtaining a better cost/efficiency ratio in training. The key question underlying the whole article is how to enrich on-the-job training and in particular the traditional apprenticeship system without laying such heavy burdens and constraints on employers that they will be discouraged, or smothering a system that with all its deficiencies none the less, taking the good years with the bad, provides the basic requirements for the transmission of knowledge and skills in Africa.

I. AN EXAMPLE OF PURE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING, TRADITIONAL APPRENTICESHIP IN AFRICA

1.1 The scope of the phenomenon

The traditional handicraft workshop is an excellent place in which to learn a trade in Africa. It is an on-the-job training school for active life which brings young persons into contact with real life working and professional conditions. The apprentice learns with the same material that is used in the trade and is steeped in the social environment where he gets to know, for example, the art of bargaining. Although the training is often sketchy and to be taught using material slightly better than is used in the trade might beget progress, it is nevertheless true that the traditional handicraft workshop is a vast and irreplaceable means for the acquisition of skills at minimal cost. According to a study of the urban informal sector in French-speaking Africa, 84 per cent of small employers learnt their trade through traditional apprenticeship,[1] and the same figure holds for Ghana (Aryee, 1976). In Zambia, the level is lower but still stands at 58 per cent[2].

As far as the apprentice and the different stages of his training are concerned, it must first of all be stressed that the apprenticeship system is firmly rooted in the native culture and is particularly well suited to the conditions of African life. The articling of the apprentice is negotiated by the master craftsman and the parents. The small entrepreneur assumes considerable responsibility towards the parents over and above the purely professional training of the young person. He has to attend closely to his education in the broadest sense of the term. All parties benefit from the system: the State has nothing to pay (the parents usually pay a sum amounting to about 150 dollars) and can at the same time use it as a barrier to unemployment and juvenile delinquency; the parents "place" their child in good hands; the young apprentice can hope one day to emulate the success of his master; the master craftsman at the cost of one or two small sacrifices (a little of his time, a little more in kind, board and lodging, and sometimes a little pocket money) obtains cheap labour and a certain standing.

Sometimes apprentices are older. These are generally parents who come to help the artisan and in so doing benefit from on-the-job training. But the vast majority are young persons (more than 60 per cent are under twenty) below average school level. On-the-job training is the last resort for the unschooled and school drop-outs.

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[1] C. Maldonado and G. le Boterf: "L'apprentissage et les apprentis dans les petits métiers urbains" (Geneva, ILO, 1985).

[2] G. A. Aryee: Notes on youth employment prospects in manufacturing-Implications for training policy. Paper submitted to the ILO Workshop on Training in the Urban Informal Sector, at the International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training, Turin, 7-11 April 1987 (Lusaka, ILO Southern African Team for Employment Promotion, 1987).

1.2 The course of the operation

The period of apprenticeship varies in length and is roughly fixed at the start. For the manufacture of rattan furniture, it is only two years. It is over five years on an average in carpentry and six in jewellery. It is generally considered that it tends to be too long, particularly in West Africa, and the responsibility for this is usually laid at the door of the master-craftsmen who are disinclined to carry out systematic intensive training and none too anxious to deprive themselves too soon of cheap labour or create potential competition. The traditional cultural models also include a long period of socialisation during which the apprentice wins his adoption by the master craftsman and his family by his respect and loyalty, progressively meriting thereby the right to learn. Finally, the termination of the apprenticeship is often delayed quite simply because the apprentice cannot raise the funds he needs to set up on his own.

During the socialisation stage, the apprentice works as a messenger boy, doing odd jobs sometimes having no connection with the trade, such as running errands. Next, he begins to learn the name of the tools and how to use them; then he is encouraged to learn by watching and imitating more and more complicated tasks. The table hereunder, made up from case studies, summarises the different stages of on-the-job training in wickerwork, carpentry and jewellery[3]. Case studies have also been made of motor car mechanics whose training, too, seems to be exclusively a matter of observation and imitation without any theoretical elements. The apprentices do their best to find out what is wrong with a car by trial and error (sometimes to the detriment of he vehicle); in the end they learn how to perform a number of operations properly. Mechanics are often blamed for giving their apprentices only subordinate tasks and keeping the more skilled work for themselves.

1.3 Evaluation of traditional apprenticeship: changes under way

Despite its shortcomings, traditional apprenticeship seems to compare favourably with formal technical education institutions not only in cost (this will be considered again in the third part) but also in quality and in ensuring subsequent employment. In 1985, a round table was held at Abidjan by young jewellers trained entirely in the informal sector and their vocational school graduate (CAP) colleagues from the jewellery vocational training centre. The conclusions were as follows:

(a) Training is more complete in informal sector workshops where apprenticeship includes all aspects of the profession;

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[3] M. Sangare: "Le secteur informel en milieu urbain: études de cas sur le système de formation des bijoutiers et dans le secteur de l'ameublement à Abidjan" (Abidjan, CIADFOR, 1986, unpublished) and M. Bocum: "Identification d'une alternative de formation à moindre coût susceptible d'améliorer la qualification des mécaniciens-auto du secteur informel" (Abidjan, CIADFOR, 1986, unpublished). These two studies are summarised in F. Fluitman: Training in the urban informal sector of developing countries. Some recent findings of local observers, Paper submitted to the ILO Workshop on Training in the Urban Informal Sector, 7-11 April 1987, op. cit., and Vocational Training Branch Discussion Paper No. 6, (Geneva, ILO, 1987).

Table: The different phases of on-the-job training for informal sector apprentices

WICKERWORK	CARPENTRY	JEWELLERY
(1) Learning to scrape rattan with knife (6 months)	(1) Socialisation odd jobs (6 months)	(1) Getting used to the tools, how to light the fire and keep it in. Learning the relation between the fire, the mould and gold or silver (6 months)
(2) Learning to prepare and fix the canes giving rigidity to the furniture (4 months)	(2) Discovery of the tools (1 month)	(2) Hammering metal into desired shapes (6 months)
(3) Learning to give rattan the desired form e.g., curved for chairs. This operation calls for skilled use of the blowlamp (5 months)	(3) Assembly of parts made by master-carpenter (6 months)	(3) Giving metal wire decorative shapes (1 year)
(4) Learning assembly techniques, sense of dimensions (7 months)	(4) Finishing (18 months) (3rd class carpenter)	(4) Using blowlamp (1 year)
	(5) Visits outside, to make ceilings, take measurements, finish pieces (1 year)	(5) All phases of production as assistant jeweller (3 years)
	(6) Responsible for an outside building site (1 year) (5th class carpenter)	
	TOTAL (average)	
2 years	5 years	6 years

(b) The jeweller trained in the informal sector has a better chance of getting work on the labour market. There are many vocational school graduates among the registered unemployed;

(c) The jeweller trained in the informal sector has had contacts with customers and management;

(d) The cost at the centre is disproportionate to the results.

Mabawonku has drawn some interesting comparisons between traditional apprenticeship and technical colleges in Nigeria[4]. Graduates from the latter have too little practical experience and no knowledge of marketing and accountancy. On the other hand, apprentices have learnt how to buy and sell and have practical competence, but they lack theoretical knowledge.

The principal defect of the traditional apprenticeship system is precisely insufficient theoretical training. This is due to the low level of knowledge of the master craftsmen themselves and also to the fact that the number of apprentices in relation to the number of the skilled workers is often excessive (for example, at Kumasi, Ghana, the proportion was nine to one, according to a study made by G. Aryee). A welcome trend is, however, becoming apparent in the level of the artisans with the arrival of large numbers of redundancies from the modern sector; indeed, these new employers sometimes bring with them technological know-how, personal relations giving them access to sub-contracting, and a more open-minded outlook[5]. Mechanised work, the reading of plans, the use of new products are some of the knowledge they can pass on to their apprentices. Young persons and their parents are not mistaken in addressing so many of their demands for apprenticeship to these newcomers.

Before this trend had been accelerated by economic restructuring and adjustments following on large scale transfers of personnel from the modern sector with the consequent transformation of its management and production methods, studies had already shown that the best economic performances in terms of such variables as individual profit and value added were obtained by employers who had benefited from a combination of technical schooling and traditional handicraft apprenticeship[1].

It seems therefore that turning the complementary nature of the two systems to account gives good results. Consideration will now be given to the efforts made by legislation, institutions and enterprises to carry this trend further through a more harmonious combination of on-the-job training with the theoretical contributions of the modern sector.

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[4] A. F. Mabawonku, : An economic evalutation of apprenticeship training in western Nigerian small-scale industries. (Michigan State University, 1979).

[5] Françoise Dureau and Antoine Dubert: "L'apprentissage en mutation", in "CIADFOR - Infos", No. 80, Avril/Mai 1986.

II. ON THE JOB TRAINING IN ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER TYPES OF TRAINING: COMPLEMENTARITY AND ALTERNATING TRAINING

The harmonisation of two such different cultural environments is no easy matter. On the one hand, there is the world of ACTION, a practical world fighting for existence and power, a world weighed down by material constraints and market and human needs, rigidly managed and with little time for reflection. On the other, there is the world of THEORY, a rich, brilliant, innovative world, full of ideas and creativity but out of touch with reality. Without going so far as to follow the example of Germany in its "dualist system" allying practical training in the firm with theoretical training in a vocational school, many countries have none the less tried to harmonise school and work, theory and practice.

2.1 Legislation on apprenticeship follows this trend. We shall not refer here to the many legislative measures all too often modelled on those of the former colonial power, by which different countries have sought since the sixties to regulate the massive and spontaneous phenomenon of traditional apprenticeship. Totally unadapted to local conditions, they have lapsed into well deserved disuse. In the Ivory Coast, for example, according to the National Vocational Training Bureau survey, in 1984 apprentices articled in accordance with the formal requirements of the law represented only 1.28 per cent of manpower in the modern sector. In Burkina Faso, only 61 apprenticeship contracts were registered between 1978 and 1980, 86 between 1980 and 1982, and 29 in 1983/1984[1]. In Mali, 28 contracts were registered between 1975 and 1978 and 28 between 1980 and 1983[1].

The laudable desire to ensure minimum protection for young persons liable to become victims of abusive exploitation should not blind us to facts. Many small artisans are put off by the mere idea of having to draft a contract in French or English. Besides, some of the legal provisions are irritatingly trivial and unrealistic. An example is a provision in the law of a developing country which lays down that "no one shall be articled as an apprentice unless he is at least 1m 46 high, weighs 38 kg, uses no hearing aid and has enough of his own teeth to be able to chew". This country, it is true, is outside Africa, but a draft under construction for a French-speaking African country prescribes tha. when a master craftsman becomes a widower he shall at once send away any young girls under age who are lodged beneath his roof as apprentices. One wonders what puritan consultant sitting in his office drafted this text and where he thought the young girl apprentices were going to find to stay.

Fear of financial and fiscal implications is, of course, the main cause of artisan reluctance to sign contracts observing the legal requirements in every respect. Unfortunately, if the apprenticeship laws were strictly applied, the results would be the opposite of those desired; artisans would be unable, and would no longer wish, to take on apprentices and would flood the streets with thousands of young persons. Despite its many defects, traditional apprenticeship is a key factor in vocational training in Africa. It should only be modified with caution and to a limited extent, starting from what exists and trying to improve it little by little.

More recent laws for the "adaptation and renovation" of apprenticeship seek to provide for alternate periods of theoretical training by giving entrepreneurs themselves proficiency courses and pedagogical support in their training function. The 1977 law in the Ivory Coast, the 1983 law in Togo, the 1981 law in Algeria creating the National Institute for the Promotion and Development of Vocational Training in the Enterprise and Apprenticeship, all tend in this direction. The last named even provides for the granting of financial relief to enterprises taking on apprentices. The chief beneficiary of these new measures has, however, been the structured sector. In the Ivory Coast, the number of modern enterprises accepting apprenticeship counsellors rose from 12 in 1978 to 165 in 1985, corresponding to 284 apprentices. This is, therefore, an interesting but still very marginal phenomenon, even in the structured sector.

2.2 Modern sector enterprises, particularly those concerned with complicated technology calling for a minimum of theoretical training have gone as far as to combine practical and theoretical instruction through alternate periods of on-the-job training and in-plant training away from the work station. The training, simpler and paying more attention to know-how than that of the formal educational system, is of various kinds, ranging from basic technological initiation, elementary training, supplementary training, retraining and proficiency training. The courses are generally given at in-plant centres and combined with on-the-job training. The courses include, among other activities, training in methodology for managerial personnel, foremen and gang leaders, who are the main pillars of on-the-job training. The Ivory Coast has twenty enterprises with their own training centre. Most of the African countries have a corresponding number. In many of them, training in enterprises is encouraged by legislation providing for tax relief.

The following are a few interesting examples (taken from ILO studies currently in hand) of training in enterprises in which on-the-job training and in-plant training have been judiciously combined and training in institutions serves to back up on-the-job training.

(a) In Egypt, the steelworks were faced at the start with an 80 per cent illiteracy rate among their production workers. They had to organise on-the-job training to meet immediate operational needs. A centre was created in the enterprise and run by a university professor. The production/training conflict was not long delayed. Production preferred to handle the training itself, on the job, rather than send workers to follow theoretical courses, whereas the training service gave priority to literacy and basic vocational training. Each side was deaf to the arguments of the other. Production said "You are unrealistic in your study of needs; courses should meet the needs of production." Training replied "You refuse to admit that training is a specialised activity calling for formal planning and control." The conflict was solved by reorganisation including the appointment of a new head in charge of training (a consultant responsible directly to the President) and maximum decentralisation in the analysis of needs.

Later on, in order to meet the need for additional skilled manpower, the steelworks chose to engage secondary school leavers rather than graduates from technical schools and vocational training centres. The school leavers were given two years training in the enterprise following a programme prepared jointly with the production services and comprising work on the morning shift and training in the afternoon. In the second year, the theoretical training was cut to one day a week (given by the enterprise staff).

(b) In Benin, a small metallurgical enterprise with 40 employees has opted for formal apprenticeship on the basis of one apprentice per skilled worker. The period of apprenticeship is three years and includes observation of activities and working methods during the first year; maintenance and security, and practice in work and workshop routine during the second year. On two days in the week, the apprentice attends courses at the local vocational training centre. During the third year, he is assigned to a skilled worker as his assistant and learns only on-the-job.

(c) In Sudan, a large textile factory organised a course on training methodology for the managerial personnel responsible for on-the-job training. A vast programme for the reduction of costs and waste held subsequently throughout the enterprise gave encouraging results (3 per cent reduction in production costs in the first three months).

(d) The Ethiopian Management Institute (EMI) is a particularly interesting example of the improvement of on-the-job training through co-operation between a training institution and enterprises. In 1985, the Ethiopian economy was seriously affected by the very low level of maintenance services; 78,000 workers had to be rapidly trained in maintenance throughout the country, but the yearly capacity of the EMI Productivity Improvement Centre workshops was only 250 and that of in-plant training centres, 400. EMI therefore, in 1986, launched the Guided Transmission Training (GTT) programme to train maintenance chiefs and foremen as "transmitters". These "transmitters", using tailored programmes and pedagogical support, were to have a multiplier effect among assistant mechanics and assistant electricians, greasers and their enterprises. The final target was to reach a 95 per cent level of availibility of motor vehicles. It is still too early to assess the success of the programme, but it seems in any case to have been well designed and oriented in the right direction, namely the training of the largest number at the lowest cost with the best results by means of the best possible combination of on-the-job training with theoretical and methodological instruction in formal education institutions and in-plant training centres.

The foregoing four examples are unfortunately exceptions proving the truth of the following two less optimistic statements:

- Apprenticeship in Africa covers two different situations:

  (i) A live reality, apprenticeship in the family or to an artisan;

  (ii) A set of legislative texts applicable only to a few modern sector enterprises and a dead letter for the greater number.

- Harmonious combination of on-the-job training and complementary theoretical training at a centre, whether in the enterprise or outside, is still exceptional.

It remains to be considered what recommendations can be formulated in order to improve this situation in the future and obtain a better cost/efficiency ratio for training.

III. TOWARDS A BETTER COST/EFFICIENCY RATIO FOR TRAINING THROUGH IMPROVED ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

A report to the World Bank on human resources in Africa states that the increase in investments in human resources needed to support economic growth during the next twenty or thirty years will endanger the budgetary and economic health of a great many African countries for the next five or ten years[6]. This warning is pertinent. For the State, things cannot go on as they are with expenditure on education reaching such enormous proportions as, for example, 40 per cent of the administrative budget of the Ivory Coast. As demand is constantly growing and there are no additional resources in view, it must therefore rest with the cost/efficiency ratio to produce better results with less. The trend should, indeed, be in both directions: a greater number of people should be trained and the training should be more productive at less cost. On-the-job training is at the crossroads of these two directions; it is meant for a very large number of people and it requires no heavy investment. Its efficiency is sometimes disputed and it undoubtedly needs to be improved but, as has been seen above, it can sometimes bear favourable comparison with formal education.

3.1 Should traditional apprenticeship be subsidised?

Most apprenticeship laws leave out of account the very obvious fact that artisans cannot be expected to look kindly on, or co-operate in, schemes that are liable to threaten their means of livelihood. If the apprenticeship system is to be strengthened, it will have to be financed, artisans will have to be compensated for the extra burdens to be laid on them; if the costs are greater than the benefits, artisans will refrain from hiring apprentices. Considering the extent to which the formal system of education is subsidised, it can be said that it is unfair to leave the informal sector to bear the cost of its vocational training unaided. For example, the National Vocational Training Office at Abidjan gives the following figures for the two-year CAP (proficiency certificate) courses at the Touba Motor Car Training Centre: 3,300 dollars a year per pupil operational costs and 1,500 dollars in fixed assets, or 4,800 dollars, to which should be added 700 dollars a year in fellowships granted the pupils who are all boarders. In other words, 5,500 dollars a year, or 11,000 dollars for the two years. Compared with these enormous sums, a few hundred dollars a head paid for apprenticeship would certainly have a spectacular impact.

Subsidies to master craftsmen should be highly selective and warranted by verifiable improvement in their services as trainers. They should be made conditional on the readiness of the master craftsmen to undergo proficiency training methodology as well as minimum control of the quality of the training they give their apprentices. Artisans recently transferred from the modern sector would probably provide a by no means negligible part of this contingent of selected master craftsmen. Parents would quickly seek out these approved and subsidised master craftsmen and leave the others, who would inspire less confidence for their children. The subsidy could take the form of money or raw materials at favourable prices; it might also cover the apprentices' pocket money.

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[6] "Les Ressources Humaines en Afrique : un continent en pleine évolution" (Washington, IBRD, 1982) doc. TCDC/AF/4.

3.2 The "social treatment" of unemployment

In-plant training has recently undergone a profound change. From an economic tool in the hands of employers, it has become a social tool in the hands of governments and a means of dealing with unemployment among the young. This is true of the industrialised countries. In France, for example, recent legislation has abounded in provisions to facilitate the entry of young persons into working life, represented by an impressive display of training periods in enterprises (contracts for alternating training, employment/training, employment/adaptation, etc.). All the formulas have in common the harmonisation of practical training in the enterprise (on-the-job training) and theoretical studies at training centres.

Lack of modern industrial infrastructures has made it impossible to promote the same kind of measures in Africa, or in any case not on the same scale. The "social treatment" of unemployment has, however, taken other forms there such as the creation of building sites for "training cum production", or special programmes of labour intensive public works. In all cases, the aim has been to give the beneficiaries both vocational training and practical experience, at low cost, their saleable production being turned to account to reduce the cost of the training. Unfortunately, these projects generally stress production rather than training. The training is only a by-product of production and the project is all too often treated solely as a short term palliative for a grave and urgent unemployment situation.

Better training of the promotors and framers of programmes would make it possible to transform these projects into authentic "enterprise schools of production", in which theory would go hand in hand with on-the-job training and participants would have a chance of finding permanent work on leaving.

It is chiefly in the building industry that "training cum production" sites have proliferated. Ideally the sites chosen should be a complete product including all phases of construction, thereby providing a basis for the development of a training programme. The phases of the construction would be converted into so many training modules. Pedagogical progress, which would advance in step with the work, should be defined beforehand.

CONCLUSION

In the area of in-plant training, Africa seems to be following a development model not far removed from that known in Europe in olden times with its corporations and master-apprentice association. The progress of technology in due course called for more formal organisation of vocational training; the blackboard had to be brought in, for example, in teaching elementary mathematics, physics, technical English, as these and other disciplines became necessary for the understanding of sophisticated technology. The evolution is the same, but in Africa the system is not always ready to bear the burden of the costs. Hence the need to renovate also more traditional and less costly approaches such as on-the-job training by improving the skills of "transmitters", those charged with implementing it (in-plant trainers, master-craftsmen, foremen and gang leaders, and skilled workers), and by ensuring better co-ordination of the efforts of the enterprise and the school. This is, besides, in keeping with the trend of Recommendation 150 of the International Labour Conference which "encourages enterprises to accept the responsibility for the training of the workers they employ" ... and seek to promote "open, flexible and complementary systems of instruction ... whether these activities take place within or outside the school system."